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INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 000218

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CE JAMIE LAMORE AND EUR/RPM CHRIS DAVY.  
PLEASE PASS TO NSC KHELGERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/18/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [KPKO](#) [KV](#) [HU](#)  
SUBJECT: HUNGARY STILL TOGETHER ON THE NATO KFOR MISSION

REF: SECSTATE 26179

Classified By: Acting P/E Counselor Jon Martinson, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) MFA Security Policy and Non-Proliferation Department Deputy Director Gabor Horvath discussed reftel with PolOff March 19. Horvath stated that "we must be cautious" in reducing forces in the Balkans, and he does not envisage a reduction in the more than 400 Hungarian soldiers in Pec, Kosovo, until the Kosovo Security Forces (KSF) are fully supported and their capabilities improve. That said, Horvath stated that the GOH is doing contingency planning as to their response in terms of military support if the KFOR numbers in Kosovo or the EU ALTEA force numbers in Bosnia fall below 200 personnel. Horvath also noted the planned EULEX full operational capability by the end of March, stating that this will be a "crucial benchmark" if transition from UNMIK to EULEX moves forward without difficulty. As to Serbia's claim that the KSF is an illegal entity, Horvath responded that "we cannot alienate Serbia" but we must make it clear to them that cooperation with EULEX and KSF is essential, and the MFA would use every opportunity during official meetings with Serbian interlocutors to emphasize that message.

¶2. (C) Turning to EU's ALTEA force in Bosnia, Horvath said that the French are moving towards a complete withdrawal of their forces in the entire region, and he raised concern that the political situation is still fragile and "this is not the moment" to reduce the military presence in that region. Horvath stressed, however, that NATO should not be the sole actor responding to any contingency in a crisis situation.

¶3. (C) The DAO delivered the demarche to the Hungarian Defense Ministry on March 19. In a response on March 20, MOD Policy State Secretary Jozsef Bali stated that the MFA's response reflected the official GOH position on the issue.  
Foley